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36 CONTENTS

SUPER SCARY STORY
The Snow Cave

OUR HAUNTED WORLD
Cambodia
A Snappy Supper!

STRANGE BUT TRUE
Abe Lincoln's Ghost

CLASSIC SERIAL
The Open Door
Chapter 1

PUZZLES
Roman Relics

THE UNEXPLAINED
Dragons



Next week in

THE SPINECHILLER
Collection

SUPER SCARY STORY
Danger Island

OUR HAUNTED WORLD
Peru
Once Bitten!

STRANGE BUT TRUE
Pitdown Man

CLASSIC SERIAL
The Open Door
Chapter 2

PUZZLES
Horror Hounds

THE UNEXPLAINED
Strange Disappearances

THE SNOW CAVE



elinda's dad pulled the car into the parking space in
front of the supermarket.

"OK, Belinda," he said. "I'm going to get some
supplies and order the wood we need for the whole
two weeks we'll be in the cabin. They're predicting
snow and we'll appreciate a nice warm fire."

"Sounds great, Dad," she agreed. "Can I take Shiloh for a walk?"
"Yes, but don't go far. And zip up your jacket," he called after
her. "It's getting pretty cold."

Belinda clipped Shiloh's lead to his collar and opened the
car door. The excited husky bounded out and stood beside her,
his tail wagging. Together, Belinda and Shiloh strolled along
the high street, looking in shop windows. When they returned,
two grey-haired men were sitting on a wooden bench outside
the supermarket.



"That's a fine animal," one of the men said. Shiloh took a liking to the man right away and waited to be petted. "Are you the young lady whose folks rented the Rogers's cabin?"

"Yes, sir," she answered. "If there's enough snow, my dad is going to teach me to ski."

"If there is too much," the second man said seriously, "you could get more than you bargained for."

"I beg your pardon?" Belinda tilted her head in question.

"Don't mind old Willis," the first man, advised. "He's just afraid of the snowman."

Belinda laughed. "Afraid of a snowman?"

The smile disappeared from Willis's face. "We're not talking about a ball of snow with a carrot nose and a top hat. Have you ever heard of the yeti?"

Belinda nodded. "It's a huge ape-like creature that lives in the mountains in Asia. But it's only a legend."

Willis leaned back in his chair. "According to a local Indian legend, something like the yeti once lived in these mountains. Maybe it still does." The man's eyes twinkled. "There's a chain of underground caves around here, with several different openings to the surface. Nobody knows just how far they go back, or what might be living in them."

Belinda was fascinated. "If there are snow creatures here, why hasn't anyone seen them?"

Frank took a long drag on his pipe and let the smoke slowly curl from his lips. "Maybe some people did. Back in 1939,

when we were kids, we used to play up at that ridge where the Rogers's cabin stands now. It was a good hill for sledging. One weekend there was a really heavy snowfall. All we wanted was to have fun." His voice faltered and his face clouded over, as if the memory of that weekend was too painful.

"One of our group," said Willis, picking up the story, "was a boy named Wally. Somehow, Wally got lost... just disappeared. Some people figured they'd find the body in Spring, but they never did. All we ever found was one of his red mittens and his broken sledge, with deep scratches in it... like claw marks." Willis glanced at Frank. "There are a few who think a yeti got him. According to the legend, they come to the surface to hunt when there's lots of snow."

"And isn't it strange," Frank added, "that every time we have a major snowfall, some hiker or skier suddenly disappears? No body... no nothing."

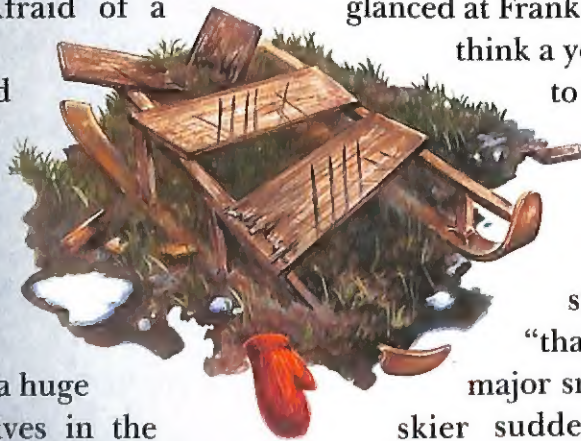
"Has anyone disappeared lately?" Belinda asked.

"No, but we haven't had much snow for eight years."

The door to the supermarket swung open and Belinda's dad stepped out with two large shopping bags. He placed them in the boot of the car and joined Belinda and the men. "Might one of you men be Willis?" he asked.

Willis nodded. "That's me."

"I'm Joe McGowan," Belinda's dad said, smiling. "They told me inside to check with you about getting the wood delivered to the cabin."



"Sure, no problem," Willis answered. "Frank and I will get it loaded in the truck and I'll bring it up shortly."

"That'll be fine," Mr McGowan said, then turned to Belinda. "Come on, we're all set. If we don't get back to the cabin soon your mum will start to get worried."

When they got into the car and set off, it started snowing and Belinda told her dad the story about the legend.

He laughed. "Well, I can't say that I believe in snow monsters, but there is a good point to the story. These woods can be dangerous, and people can easily get lost."

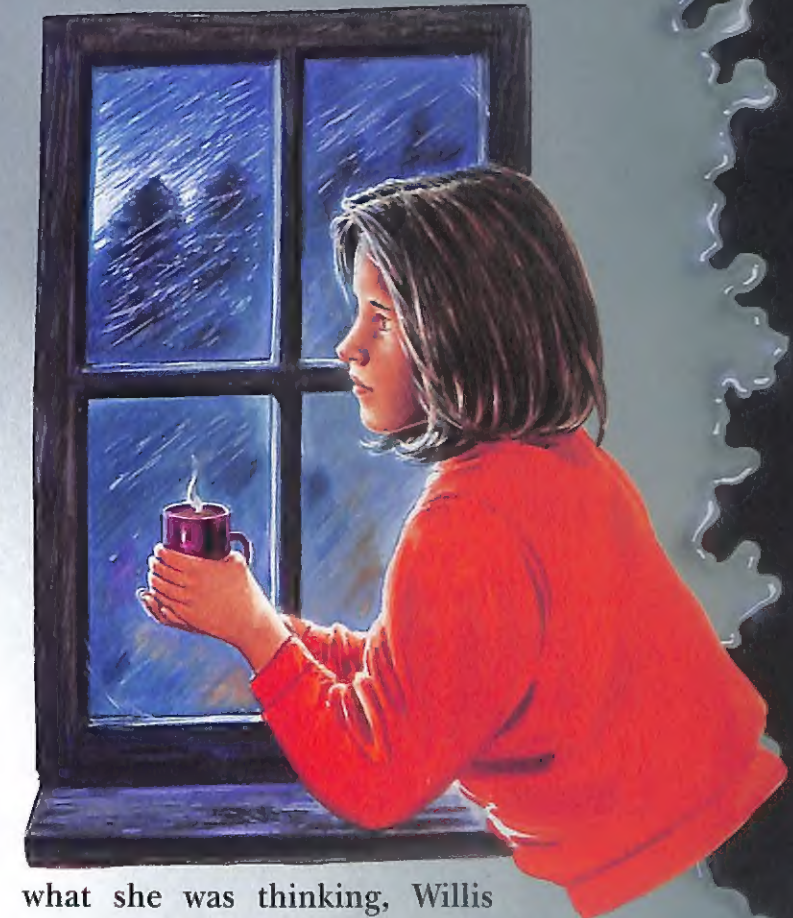
Belinda buried her fingers in Shiloh's thick coat. "I don't have to worry as long as Shiloh's with me," she said. "Isn't that right, boy?" Shiloh answered by licking her ear.



It wasn't a long drive, but by the time they got to the cabin the snow was piling up. Within an hour, Willis arrived with the firewood, and Belinda and her dad helped him to unload it. Belinda's mum made them all a hot cup of cocoa, which they drank in the living room in front of a warm fire.

After a while, Willis put down his cup. "I don't mean to rush off," he said, as he pulled on his jacket, "but it looks like the weather's getting worse. I think I'd best get back to town. We haven't had this much snow in a long time."

Belinda glanced out of the window at the darkening landscape. As if he knew



what she was thinking, Willis laughed. "Don't be concerned, little lady. The storm will blow over by tomorrow." He trudged out into the snow, then stopped and called back over his shoulder. "If you folks need anything, just call down to the supermarket."

Willis was wrong. It snowed the whole night and through the next day and night, too. The weather report on the radio said that it was the most snow that had fallen in thirty years.

But the next day the clouds cleared. The air was cold and crisp, and huge snowdrifts glistened in the winter sunshine. Belinda was too excited to think about snow monsters. Instead, the family dressed up warmly and headed outside with the large plastic sledges they had brought with them. Belinda's parents had taught her to respect nature and prepare for anything, so she also took a few supplies in a bum-bag.

It took some time for the family to work their way up through the soft snow to the top of the ridge behind the cabin, but it was worth it. There was a long, wide clearing on the hill, with dense forest on each side. Soon Belinda and her parents were taking turns whizzing down the open patch of hillside on their sledges, then scrambling back up again for another ride. Each time Belinda swooshed downwards, Shiloh raced along behind.

"Whew!" Belinda's mum exclaimed as they scrunched up the hill together. "I think I've had enough."

"Oh, Mum – just one more ride?" Belinda begged. "Why don't we all race to the bottom of the hill?"

"OK!" her dad said, as he jumped on his sledge. "Last one to the bottom is a rotten egg!" Laughing, Belinda and her mum each belly flopped onto their sledges and raced after him.

Belinda was a little behind when her sledge hit a patch of icy snow and veered off to the right. She tried to correct the turn, but she was going too fast. The sledge sped in among the trees and headed for a huge pine. Belinda tumbled off and rolled into a big drift of snow. Helpless, she slid downwards, picking up speed towards a wide, flat rock that stuck up out of a drift. She curled in her legs and covered her head with her arms, expecting to crash.

Instead of hitting the rock, she slid through a small opening beneath it. She slid further into the darkness, then felt herself tumble over a ledge and fall about two metres straight down. Screaming into

the nothingness, Belinda finally came to an abrupt stop on cold, hard ground. Then everything went black.



At first, when she came to, Belinda thought that she had been dreaming. But as soon as she moved, she knew it was all real.

Nothing seemed to be broken, but she was sore all over. If it hadn't been for her layers of padded winter clothing, she would surely have been seriously hurt by the fall. She reached under her jacket and was relieved to find that the bum-bag was still strapped to her waist. Fumbling a little in the inky blackness, she pulled out her small torch, clicked it on and surveyed her surroundings.

"Wow," she said aloud to herself. "What is this place?"

The beam of light revealed a large cave with several tunnels leading from it. She moved the light up and saw an opening above her and realised she had fallen through it. Slowly, she stood up and rubbed her sore legs. The opening was just a little out of reach. She looked around to see if there was anything to stand on. The cave was empty.

"HELLO!" she called out. "HELLO! I'm down here. Can anybody hear me?" There was no answer. How long had she been down here? She realised that her parents must be searching for her, but they probably had not seen her veer off into the forest. How would they find her?



"There must be another way out," she murmured, remembering what Willis had said about the caves and how there were several openings to the surface. She tried not to think about the other things he had told her.

Taking a deep breath, Belinda chose one of the tunnels and entered it. In some places she had to duck way down and crawl. She had the feeling that she was heading further down, but where else could she go? She had to try it.

Finally, the passage opened up into another wide cavern. Belinda shone the torch around and noted that there were other tunnels. Then her foot kicked something. She turned the beam on it and screamed at the empty eye sockets staring blindly up at her. It was a human skull. In horror, Belinda moved the torch beam a little further and saw that the skull was attached to other bones that had once been the body of a child. And worst of all, the skeleton was wearing a single red mitten on one hand!

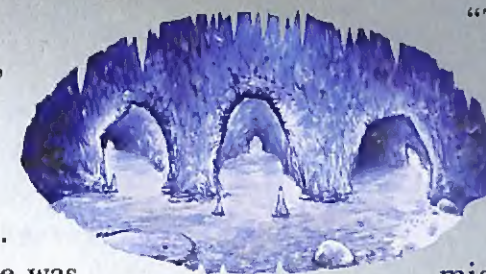
"Wally!" she cried, not hearing the muffled footsteps slipping up behind her in the dark. Then, all at once, she felt a presence. Slowly she turned and saw a horrible monster in the glare of her torch. It was a huge beast covered with stiff, white fur. It had enormous, bloodshot eyes and a snarling mouth full of sharp, yellow fangs. Roaring in anger, the creature slashed at Belinda with its bear-like claws.

She ducked the blow and dashed for another tunnel. Her heart pounding, she sprinted along the twisting passage and, bursting into an open space, saw the very same skeleton she had seen before.

"The tunnels must be interconnected," she whispered. "I'm going in circles!"

Although she had no idea where the beast might be, Belinda tried another entrance and stumbled along, drawing in the stale air in ragged gasps. After what seemed like ages, she found herself once again in the same horrible chamber. Without hesitating, she dashed into another tunnel.

This time she seemed to be climbing, perhaps towards the surface! The thought gave her courage and she ran faster. Then, suddenly, she stumbled. Grabbing onto an outcrop of rock, she managed to stop her fall. She shone her



torch ahead and saw that she was actually at the rim of some sort of ledge. One side of the tunnel dropped away into a deep, wide crevasse. As she tried to see how far along the path the crevasse ran, her torch dimmed and slowly faded out.

Belinda's heart sank. Now she was completely enveloped in darkness. The hairs stood up on the back of her neck as she heard the echoing sound of a long, low snarl. Where was it

coming from? How close was it? She set her jaw in determination. She was not going to just sit and wait for the snow monster to find her. Instead, she dropped to her knees and carefully felt her way along the path. "I will get out," she said to herself. To keep her spirits up, she thought of Shiloh. For a moment, she smiled as she remembered his excited bark. It seemed that she could actually hear it.

"Wait a minute!" Belinda said aloud as

she straightened up. "I do hear it." She strained her ears. "Shiloh?"

Now she could hear voices, too... human voices.

"Belinda!" her dad called.

"DAD! I'm over here," she cried. Slowly, the tunnel brightened. A moment later, her father and another man turned a corner with Shiloh leading them.

"DAD!!" Belinda jumped to her feet and ran towards them. But then, with a bloodcurdling snarl, the snow monster leaped out from a side tunnel, raised its claws, then suddenly cried out in agony. Shiloh had raced ahead and sunk his teeth into the beast's leg.

The hideous monster twisted clumsily to strike at the dog, but Shiloh held on as the savage snow creature toppled and fell, howling into the crevasse. "Shiloh! Let go!" Belinda screamed as she threw herself forwards and grabbed Shiloh to stop him from falling with the monster.

Belinda's dad reached out and scooped her up in his arms. "It's OK, baby," he said comfortingly. "We're getting you out of here."



A little later, Belinda woke up in her own bed. Her mother was sitting at her side and Shiloh was stretched out on the floor chewing on a big, meaty bone.

"Mum?" Belinda sat up. "Was it a dream?"

"No, honey," her mother said, hugging her tightly.

"How did you find me?"

Belinda's mother smiled down at the husky at her feet. "Shiloh led us to the spot where you had disappeared. It was too small for us to get through, so we had to get help. Once we were able to widen the opening, Shiloh led the rescue party to you. People from all over town came to help."

There was a knock at the door, and Willis poked his head inside. "I came to see if you were all right," he said gently.

"I'm fine now," Belinda said. "Is the monster dead?"

"We can only hope so," Willis answered. He stood near the window, watching the first flakes of a new snowstorm.

Shiloh lifted his head and turned his gaze to the window, too. Then he drew back his lip slightly to show his front fangs, and a low growl rumbled in his throat.

"It's OK, boy," Belinda soothed.

But then, of course, Belinda couldn't pick up the scent of the creature that stood at the edge of the woods, staring towards the cabin with enormous, bloodshot eyes.

THE END



OUR HAUNTED WORLD



The jungles of Cambodia are crawling with creepy tales...



THE MAGIC TOUCH

Two bulls were saved from the slaughter when villagers discovered they had magical licking powers. Locals believed that just one lick from the bulls was enough to make the lame walk and the blind see. When news spread, sick people from all over Cambodia flocked to the village of Bat Treng to be cured. If the bulls didn't lick them, they filled up bags with their

dung! One blind man put manure in his eyes to help him see. It didn't cure his sight, but it made him feel much better, he said!

THE TEMPLES THAT TIME FORGOT

French explorers couldn't believe their eyes when, in 1860, they stumbled across gigantic, spooky temples hidden in the jungle. Forgotten about by the Cambodian people for hundreds of years,

ancient 'Angkor' had been taken over – by trees. Ta Prohm (left) has a tree sprouting right through it! Inside the magnificent temples, giant faces smile at you whichever way you turn and a special spirit reaches out and touches you, so they say! Angkor was built about 700 years ago and millions of people were thought to have lived there. To this day, no one knows what happened to them.



THE ALIENS HAVE LANDED

In 1971, American soldiers fighting in Cambodia got more than they bargained for when they had a close encounter with aliens – or so the story goes. They were on a mission in the jungle when a huge round spaceship, suspended on four legs, landed in front of them! About 20 humanoids glided down the ramp dressed in one-piece jump suits carrying strange instruments. The US corporal got so freaked out by the small, grey creatures, he fired a shot and one of them dropped to the ground! The soldiers thought they would all be instantly atomized, but instead, the chief raised his hand out as a peaceful gesture. When the alien got back on his feet, they all shuffled back into their craft and left without a sound. Two months after this alleged incident, the young corporal was found dead in the jungle, so reports say, and still no one knows why.

WAR GHOSTS

In 1992, a journalist who was staying in the war-torn town of Siem Reap, was woken by balls of fire dancing outside his bedroom window. When he told locals the next day, they nodded their heads knowingly at him and said, "ghosts". After the Khmer Rouge army massacred literally millions of people in the 1970s, many believe that the country is cursed by demons and ghosts.

ABOUT TURN

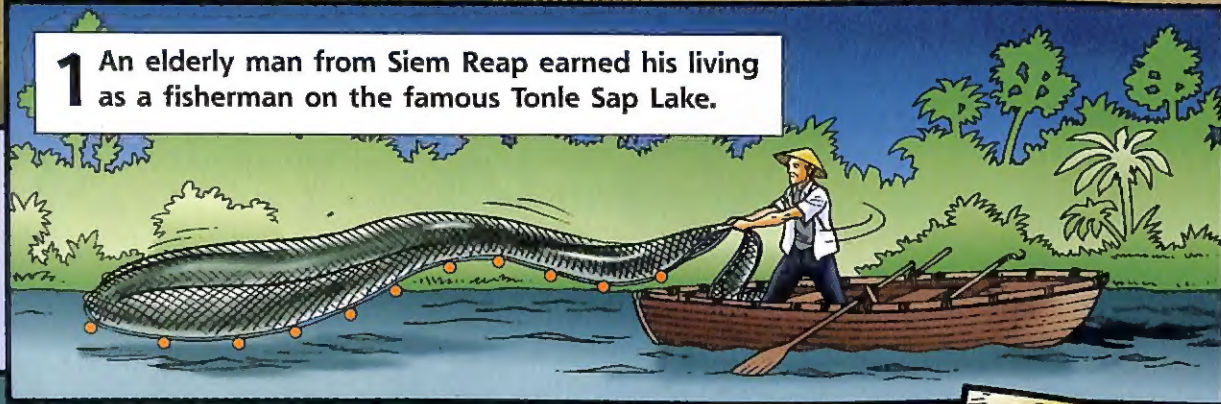
In this world of uncertainty, one thing you should be sure of is which way a river runs. But for 100 days a year, the mighty Mekong River in Cambodia breaks even the law of nature by turning round and heading backwards! Melting snow on the Himalayas – where the river starts its journey – is to blame. The Mekong can't cope with the extra water, so it heads up to the giant Tonle Sap Lake where it rests until the Himalayas start to freeze again. Only then, does it continue its journey down to the South China Sea.



A SNAPPY SUPPER!

A friend of a friend told me about a fisherman in Cambodia...

1 An elderly man from Siem Reap earned his living as a fisherman on the famous Tonle Sap Lake.

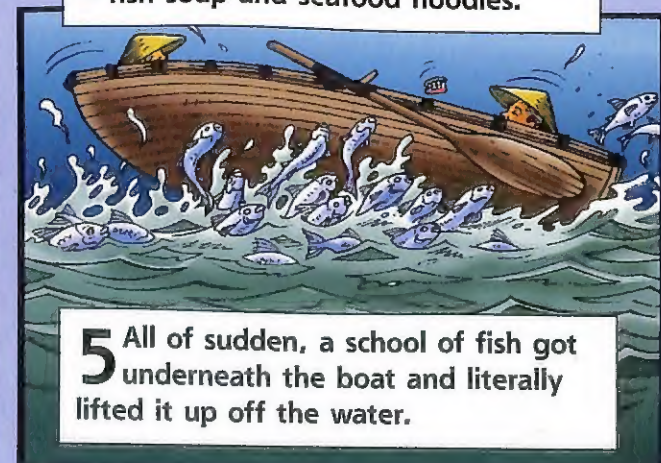
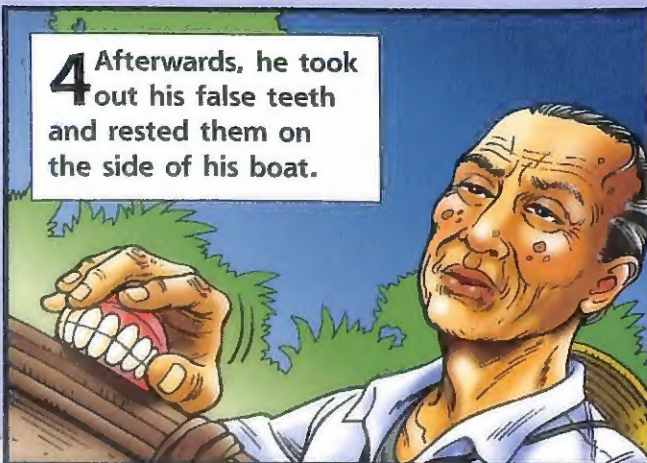


2 One weekend, he took his wife out in his little boat and they had a picnic.



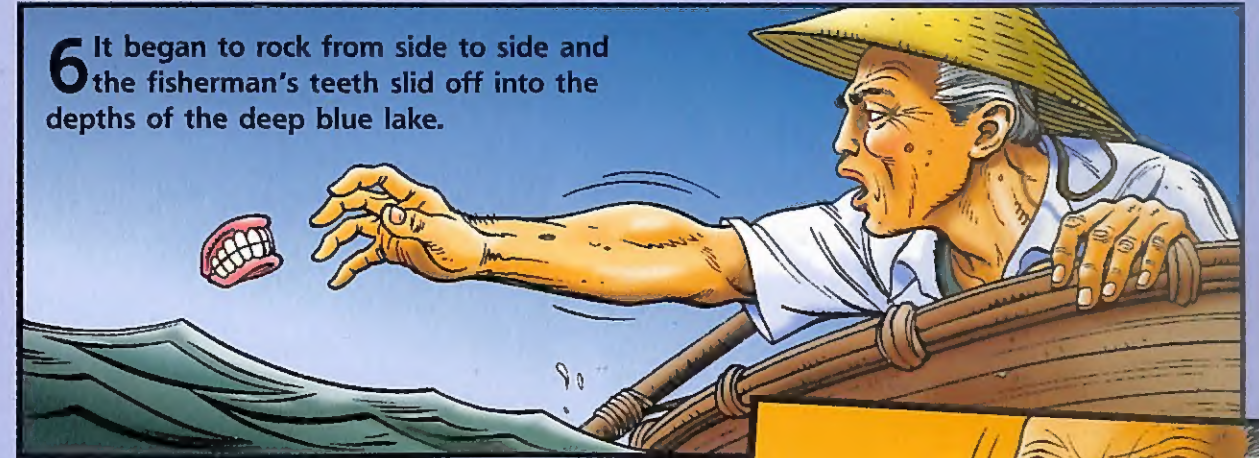
3 Out came the food bundle filled with his wife's homemade treats – fish soup and seafood noodles.

4 Afterwards, he took out his false teeth and rested them on the side of his boat.

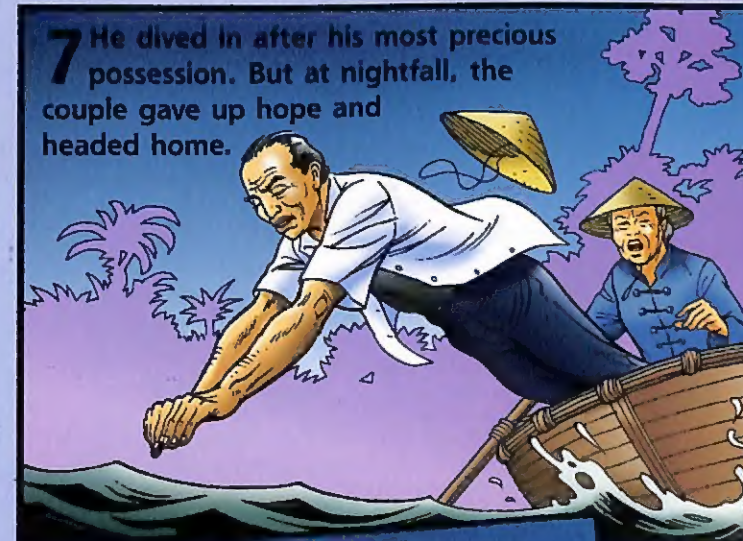


5 All of sudden, a school of fish got underneath the boat and literally lifted it off the water.

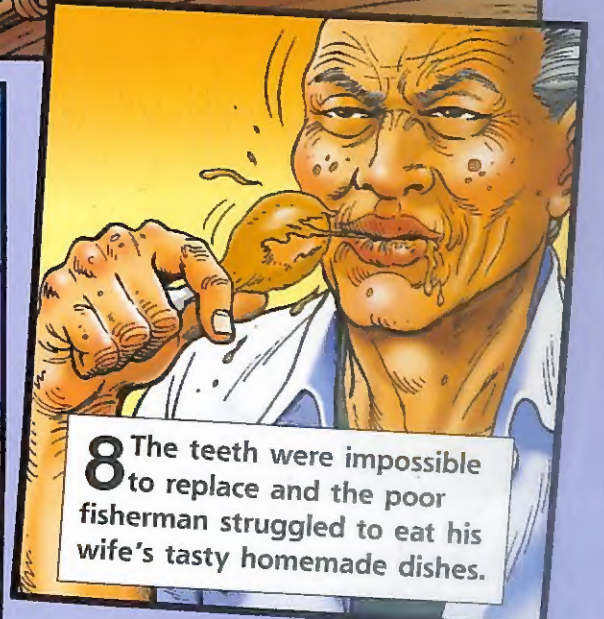
6 It began to rock from side to side and the fisherman's teeth slid off into the depths of the deep blue lake.



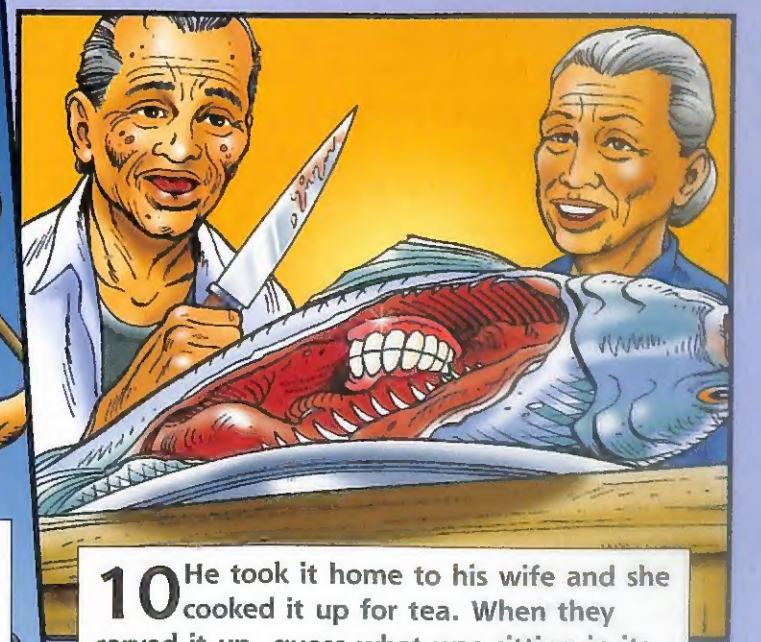
7 He dived in after his most precious possession. But at nightfall, the couple gave up hope and headed home.



8 The teeth were impossible to replace and the poor fisherman struggled to eat his wife's tasty homemade dishes.



9 Then, one year later, he went back to the same spot on the giant lake and caught his biggest ever catch.



10 He took it home to his wife and she cooked it up for tea. When they carved it up, guess what was sitting in its stomach? The old man's false teeth!



ABE LINCOLN'S GHOST

Evidence no:
36/1
Abraham Lincoln



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Abraham Lincoln became President of the United States in 1860. Like many Americans, especially those from the North, Lincoln was opposed to slavery. But many others, mainly from the South, supported it. The Southern states could not accept Lincoln's presidency and broke away from the United States. As a result, civil war broke out in the spring of 1861. This bitter struggle finally ended in victory for the North four years later, on April 9 1865.

Abraham Lincoln was not able to celebrate for long. On April 14, in a box at Ford's Theater in Washington DC, he was assassinated by pro-slavery activist John Wilkes Booth. Lincoln had been interested in the paranormal for many years and foresaw his death repeatedly in his dreams. Since he died, many people have seen his ghost roaming the White House.

Special Investigation File: 36

Subject: the ghost of a US president
Place: Washington DC, USA

SpineChiller creates a file

February 1863

MISSES GET THE MESSAGE

The President's wife, Mary Todd, is known to consult mediums. Now reports suggest that the President is also under their spell.

Two mediums in particular, Cora Maynard and Nettie Colburn, claim that they advised Lincoln to issue the Emancipation Proclamation last month. In this important document, the President officially freed the slaves.

It seems unlikely that Lincoln would act on such a major issue just because these two women told him to. But their support may have given him the courage that he needed to follow his own beliefs.

Meanwhile, rumours continue that many different mediums routinely visit the President at the White House.

Evidence no: 36/2
A group of freed American slaves in the Civil War era



30 April 1865
Dear Letitia
How tragic that the President should die, especially so soon after success in the war. But now I hear that Lincoln foresaw his own death. Shortly before, he dreamed there was a corpse in the White House. The mourners told him it was the body of the assassinated President. Did he really foresee the future? Or was he simply aware that many pro-slavery campaigners wished him dead? Either way, the country faces terrible upheaval.
Yours in sorrow
Phoenix

April 1998 GHOST TRAIN

Our reporter tells the spooky story of Lincoln's funeral train.

After the President's tragic death, his body was transported back to his home town of Springfield, Illinois by train. There it was finally laid to rest. Every year since, on the anniversary of the President's murder, the train apparently makes its ghostly journey once more.

Some witnesses tell of a single train, while others report two, one of them full of skeletons preparing the way, the other carrying the presidential coffin.

Other people claim to have heard President Lincoln's ghost walking about near to the site of his grave.

Evidence no: 36/4
Abraham Lincoln's funeral train



THE PHANTOM PRESIDENT

Following is my report on the witnesses who saw Abraham Lincoln's ghost in the White House.

Witness 1: Grace Coolidge, the wife of President Calvin Coolidge. During her husband's presidency (1923-29), Mrs Coolidge saw Lincoln's ghost standing by a window in the Oval Office. He was staring out over the Potomac River.

Witness 2: Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands. During Franklin D Roosevelt's presidency (1933-45), Queen Wilhelmina once stayed in Lincoln's former bedroom, known as the Lincoln Room. Answering a knock on the door, she saw Lincoln and fainted.

Witness 3: Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of President Franklin D Roosevelt. Mrs Roosevelt frequently sensed that former President Lincoln was nearby, especially at night. She believed that this was why her terrier dog often barked as if someone else was there.

Witness 4: Maureen Reagan, daughter of President Ronald Reagan. During the 1980s, Maureen Reagan, like Queen Wilhelmina and many others before her, saw Lincoln's spectre in the Lincoln Room.

CONCLUSION

After Lincoln's death, many strange stories grew up about him. This often happens when important people die. Lincoln believed in the supernatural himself, but it is impossible to be sure whether reported appearances of his ghost had supernatural or natural causes.

CLASSIC



SERIAL

Chapter 1

The Open Door

Retold from a story by Charlotte Riddell

I am one of the few people left who love the country and hate cities. And the country was looking its best just then, as I walked through the leafy lanes of Meadowshire in late spring, wishing I could live there forever.

I had walked a long way before chancing upon a gentleman on a horse. I asked him if he might tell me the way to Ladlow Hall.

"That is Ladlow Hall," he answered, pointing over the fence to my left. I thanked him and was going on, when he said:

"No one lives there now."

"I know," I answered.

He bade me good-day and rode off.

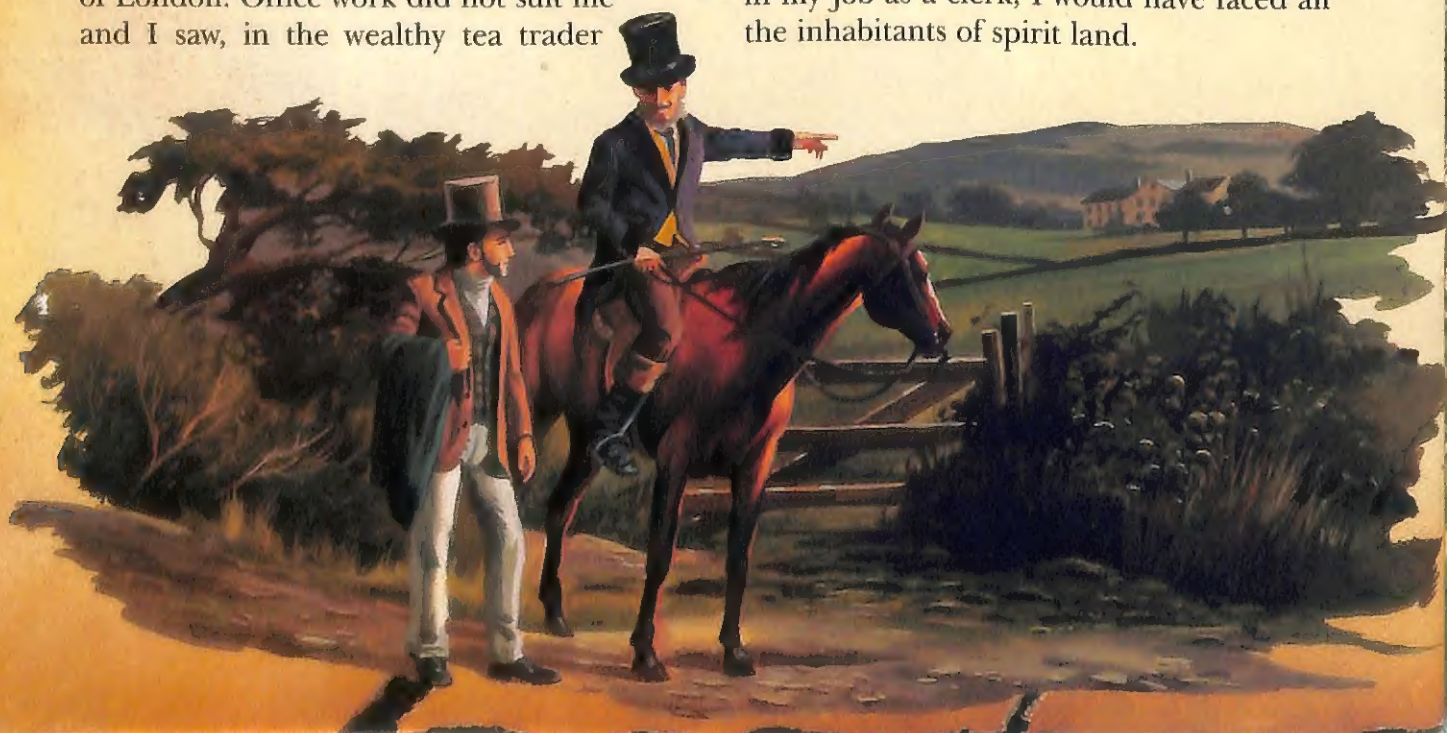
But I am getting ahead of myself. I should explain how it was that I came to be in that place. Though only twenty-two, I was keen to leave my job as a clerk with estate agents Frimpton and Frampton, in the City of London. Office work did not suit me and I saw, in the wealthy tea trader

Mr Carrison's misfortune, an opportunity to advance my own prospects. Mr Carrison had taken a long lease on Ladlow Hall, a country house, through my former employers. But he had found it to be uninhabitable due to a door that would not keep shut. Word had spread that the house was haunted.

"I can't live there," he said, when I put my proposal to him. "What's more, I can't get anyone else to live there. I can't get rid of it. Matters are at a deadlock. Others have failed to solve the mystery. But, if you want to try, I will make this bargain with you. If, after staying in the house for a week, you can keep the door shut, I will pay you the sum of ten pounds."

"Leave ghost-hunting and spirit-laying alone, Phil," my uncle advised me.

But, for ten pounds, six months' salary in my job as a clerk, I would have faced all the inhabitants of spirit land.



So, having armed myself with pistol and rifle, I set out to solve the mystery of the haunting of Ladlow Hall and to shut the open door.

From the main gate, a long avenue bordered by lime trees led straight up to the Hall.

Soon I stood looking at a square, solid house, three storeys high. A flight of steps led up to the main entrance, which had four windows on each side. All the blinds were down. A dead silence brooded over the place. I fitted the key in the lock, turned the handle and entered.

Out of the bright sunlight, my eyes grew slowly accustomed to the darkness and I found myself in an immense hall. Pictures hung all around the walls. In odd niches and corners stood statues and suits of armour. A magnificent oak staircase led to the upper rooms.

Mr Carrison had given no instructions to identify the ghostly chamber. Indeed, I knew nothing of the story connected with it. But I did know that I had never before seen so many doors. Two of them stood open.

"I'll just shut them as a beginning," I thought, "before I go upstairs."

The doors were of oak, heavy and well-fitting. I closed them very securely, then ascended the staircase and entered the many bed-chambers. Some were quite bare of furniture, others contained antique chairs, dressing-tables and wardrobes. Most doors were closed. I shut those that were open, then made my way into the attic.

I closed the doors throughout the house. Where there were keys, I locked the doors. Where there were no keys, I left them as securely fastened as possible.

When I reached the ground floor, it was nearly evening. To explore the whole house before dusk I would have to hurry.

Underlined words are explained in WORD POWER.

Next, I visited the kitchens and the domestic offices lying to the rear of the great hall. However, there was no sense in lingering over the details of larders, pantries and laundries. The mystery was scarcely likely to be there, hidden amongst the cinders and empty bottles.

Hurrying back into the hall through the gathering darkness, I felt very much alone amongst the statues and ghostly figures of men in armour. I would quickly look through the lower apartments, then decide which rooms I should occupy myself. With a hot cup of tea beside a blazing fire, I hoped I would not continue to feel quite so oppressed by the solitude of the place.

Though the sun had gone down, it was still light enough in the hall to see that one of the doors I had shut was standing open!



THE FACTS

Charlotte Riddell (1832-1906) was born into a wealthy family in Carrickfergus, Northern Ireland. Her father became ill when she was young and so was no longer able to work. As a result, the family quickly sank into poverty. In 1855, a few years after her father died, Charlotte moved to London with her mother. To earn a living, she began to write. She published her first novel, *Zurriel's Grandchild*, a year later. During her lifetime, Charlotte produced about 46 novels, as well as many magazine articles and short stories. The stories included numerous tales of the supernatural, some of which were collected in *Weird Tales* (1882). Charlotte died in Hounslow, London in 1906.

I turned to the door on the other side of the hall. It was as I had left it – closed. I had definitely discovered the room with the open door.

I shut the door once more, then walked to the grand staircase and back again. The door stood wide open. I went into the room and pulled up the blinds to take a better look. It was a dreary, gloomy room with dark, panelled walls, a black, shining floor and windows high up.

Opposite the door through which I had entered, I was astonished to find a bed. It seemed out of place in a room so near to the hall with all its noisy comings and goings. Beside it, there was another door that was locked. It was the only locked door that I had encountered in the house.

"Any crime might have been committed in such a room," I thought.

When I left through the open door, I shut and bolted it.

"I will go out and get some wood, then look at it again," I said to myself. When

I returned, it stood wide open once more. "Stay open, then!" I cried. "I will not trouble myself again with you tonight!"

As I spoke, there was a ring at the front door that echoed through the desolate house and startled me beyond expression.

It was the man who had brought my luggage from the station. I requested him to put it down in the hall. While finding some change to pay him, I asked where the nearest post-office was. "Not far," he said. "If you want a letter sent, I can drop it in the box for you. The mail-cart picks up the bag at ten o'clock."

I had nothing ready to post then, and told him so. On his way out of the door, he paused with his hand on the lock and asked:

"Are you staying here all alone, master?"

"All alone," I answered, with as much cheerfulness as I could muster.

"That's the very room, you know," he whispered, nodding in the direction of the open door.

"Yes, I know," I replied.

"Been trying to shut it already, have

WORD POWER

lease – a contract for renting a house

spirit-laying – driving out spirits; exorcising

cinders – ashes from a fire

oppressed – burdened; overwhelmed

desolate – dreary; miserable

muster – find; summon up

game – daring; courageous

you? "You are a game one!" And with that worrying comment he left.

I cast one glance at the door – it was open. Through the windows, moonlight streamed cold and silvery. I sat at a great table in the hall and wrote a brief letter to Mr Carrison. Then I walked hurriedly down the long avenue, with its mysterious lights and shades. The scent of summer and the smell of the earth were delicious. If it had not been for the door, I should have felt very happy indeed.

The post-office, in the village of Ladlow Hollow, was near an ancient bridge that spanned a stream.

As I stood by the door of the shop, talking to the post-mistress, the same gentleman that I had met that afternoon on his horse passed by on foot. He wished me goodnight as he went by, and then nodded familiarly to my companion, who curtsied.

"His lordship ages fast," she remarked.

"His lordship?" I said, feeling puzzled.

"That's Lord Ladlow," she explained, and then nodded toward the retreating figure.

Walking back to the Hall, I had much to think about. Lord Ladlow indeed! My word. I had thought he was far distant. And here I find him, walking away from his own home.

Just then, I heard a noise in the bushes nearby. In an instant I was in the thick of the undergrowth. Something shot out and then darted further into the cover provided by the

plants. I followed at once, but could catch no glimpse of it. I did not know the lie of the ground and, baffled and annoyed, had to give up the hunt.

In the house, the moon's beams were streaming down upon the hall. I could see every statue and every suit of armour. The scene seemed like something in a dream. I was tired and decided that I would not trouble about fire or food, or the open door, until the next morning.

With the intention of going to bed, I picked up some of my bags and carried them to a room on the first floor, then returned for the rest. Laying my hand on my rifle, I felt that it was wet. I touched the floor. It was also wet. Someone else had been in the house!





DRAGONS

Ask people to describe a dragon and they will probably say something along the lines of, "It's a giant fire-breathing lizards thing with huge claws and wings."

But whether or not they think dragons should be hunted down, humoured, or even honoured, really depends on where the people asked come from.

What is very odd, however, is that stories about these fire-breathing creatures come from all points of the globe – stories that date back thousands of years, long before there was communication between continents.

So how did vastly different cultures from opposite sides of the world come up with such a similar figure of fantasy. Was it just a coincidence or something else...?

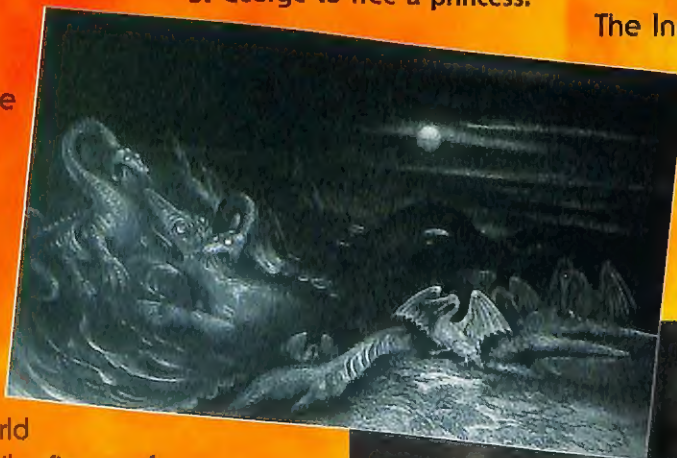
Could dragons have really existed and, if so, what happened to them?

FANTASY OR FACT?

There are several theories that may explain the age-old, worldwide belief in the fearsome, fire-breathing creature that could take to the skies flapping its scaly wings. A creature some now say never existed.



▲ TAKE THAT!
Legend tells of England's most famous dragon, slain by St George to free a princess.



▲ DRAGON DESCENDENTS?
Prehistoric sea-dwelling 'dragons', top, bear a resemblance to the Indonesian Komodo dragon, above, alive and well today!

The most obvious explanation is that this mythical creature grew out of a long-dead real animal. There are prehistoric creatures who bear a resemblance to our scaly conception of a dragon. The flying pterodactyl and the sea-dwelling plesiosaur

both look a little like a dragon. Even today there are living creatures we call dragons. The Indonesian Komodo is a 3m-long giant lizard with deadly jaws and a huge tail that kills and eats goats, pigs, deer and even donkeys.

DRAGON POWER

Dragons may look similar the world over but they often have different powers. In ancient China, dragons were associated with water and fertility. They were also seen as controllers of the weather which can bring life and growth or incredible destruction.

In Indian stories, dating from 4000 years ago, the slaying of an enraged dragon released life-giving



► DRAGON DAY
Chinese people believe dragons have magical qualities, and they usually feature at their New Year celebrations.

◀ FOILED AGAIN!
In the West, the dragon is usually the baddie! In this children's story, the hero snatches a baby from the jaws of death!

water. But for the Mayans of Central America, no good could come from dragons – dead or alive. They believed that dragons were responsible for floods, earthquakes and storms.

In the mythical stories of northern Europe, from Germany, Iceland and Anglo-Saxon Britain, the dragon is seen as a deadly foe that had to be dealt with by a passing hero. Often the dragon was guarding a hoard of treasure and represented the forces of evil. And when it wasn't guarding

treasure it was probably making off with small children to feed its huge appetite for young flesh! The Ancient Greeks could also see no good in dragons. A myth tells of the first dragon Typhon, who was chased by Zeus, King of the gods, who buried the dragon under the Mount Etna volcano in Sicily, which is still exploding today. Obviously the power of the dragon could be caged – but not extinguished altogether!



DRAGONS TODAY

The long-held belief in the East that the power of the dragon can be used for good as long as it is respected and honoured seems to be going strong.

In Chinese culture, there is a belief that currents of energy run through the Earth. These energy flows are called Dragon Paths. When the Emperors were powerful in China, they had special technicians who made sure that these Dragon Paths were not obstructed and ran towards the Imperial Palace in Beijing. In China today, they still take care to place buildings or roads in harmony with these paths.

ROMAN RELICS PUZZLES

LOST LEGIONARIES

These ghostly Roman legionaries are marching on through the mists of time.

One soldier is different from the others in six ways. Can you spot them?

TAILAT

SUBTRU

COIDUCAB

MURDER MOST FOUL!

One of Julius Caesar's assassins is hiding here. Unscramble the names on the left to find three suspects (they're all famous). Then pick the killer!

DATE WITH DEATH

The day of Gaius Julius Caesar's death in 44BC is contained within the famous warning on the right. But what date in March does it mean? Find out by following the ink lines from each number shown. Only one leads all the way back to the pen.

BEWARE
THE
IDES
OF
MARCH

PHANTOM FACTS

The salt marshes of Mersey Island in Essex are the eerie setting for accounts of at least one ghostly centurion's marching footsteps along part of an old Roman road. Perhaps not so strangely, human ashes and a Roman centurion's personal possessions were unearthed from a nearby burial mound!

FEARSOME FACTS

The brutally insane behaviour of Roman emperor, Caligula, made him more monster than man. He relished murder and torture, declaring himself a god and promoting his horse to the high office of consul!

PICK THE PAIRS!

The four sums below are also shown in Roman numerals. Can you match the pairs. Look around for some clues to help you.

A: $12 + 4 - 3 = 13$.

B: $40 \div 20 + 19 = 21$

C: $52 - 30 + 100 = 122$

D: $1000 \div 10 \times 2 = 200$.

a: $XL?XX?XIX=XXI$.

b: $M?X?II=CC$.

c: $XII?IV?III=XIII$.

d: $LII?XXX?C=CXXII$.

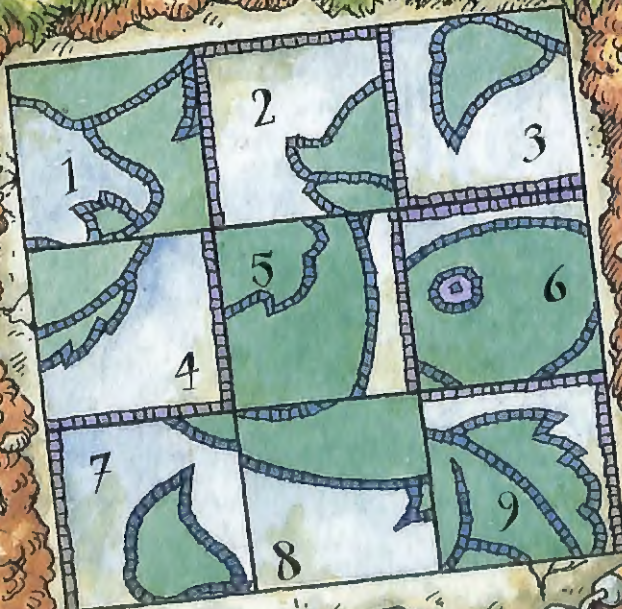
50=L

HIDDEN HOARD

How many identical Roman coins can you find in the picture?

LOOKS FISHY!

This mosaic is all muddled up. Can you work out the correct order of the nine squares? If you get stuck, make a tracing and cut up the squares. To get the true picture, look at the title above.



FATAL FACTS

Like Caligula, who was assassinated, Claudius I, who succeeded him, also met an untimely death. He was poisoned, probably by his plotting wife Agrippina, using a tainted dish of mushrooms.

FREAKY FACTS

Supernatural activity at a castle in neighbouring Kent includes the footsteps of another Roman soldier while a late-19th century report tells of a phantom Roman legion being seen on the site of an ancient battle!

ANSWERS

LOST LEGIONARIES The odd-soldier-out is number 2. The six small differences are to his helmet, his lance, his sword, his left sandal, his shoulder armour and his shield. PICK THE PAIR! A: Do; B: Cd; D: B. MURDER MOST FOUL! The assassin is BRUTUS. The other famous figures are ATTILA and Boudicca. DATE WITH DEATH = 45. HIDDEN HOARD There are 10 coins. LOOKS FISHY! The correct order of squares that completes the mosaic picture correctly = (from left to right), top row: 2, 6, 9; middle row: 7, 1, 5; bottom row: 3, 8, 4.